

What is claimed is:

1. A product comprising a label portion that is electrically modifiable.
2. The product of claim 1 wherein said label portion is a modify-once electrically modifiable label.
3. The product of claim 1 wherein said product includes at least one electrical contact to allow application of an electrical potential that modifies said label portion.
4. The product of claim 3 wherein said at least one electrical contact remains accessible to program said label portion at least once after manufacturing and testing of said apparatus.
5. The product of claim 1 wherein said label portion comprises an electrically programmable bar code.
6. A product having an electrically alterable product identifier capable of being altered by application of an electrical potential.
7. The product of claim 6 wherein said electrically alterable product identifier specifies one or more characteristics of the product.

8. The product of claim 7 wherein the product is an electronic component and wherein the one or more characteristics is one or more characteristics chosen from a set consisting of:

a frequency ratio indicating a ratio of operating frequencies of different portions of said electronic component;

an operating frequency of at least a portion of the electronic component;

a cache size;

an operating potential; and

a particular product feature which is either enabled or disabled as is indicated by the electrically alterable product identifier.

9. The product of claim 6 wherein the electronically alterable product indicator specifies a product name.

10. A label comprising:

an indicator which changes a detectable characteristic upon application of an electrical current.

11. The label of claim 10 wherein application of the electrical current permanently changes the detectable characteristic.

12. The label of claim 10 wherein said indicator is human readable.

13. The label of claim 10 wherein said indicator is detectable by electronic equipment.

14. The label of claim 10 wherein said indicator comprises a plurality of adjacent programmable segments capable of being enabled or disabled to form a bar code pattern.

15. An apparatus comprising:

an electronic component having a plurality of operating modes;

an electronically programmable indicator capable of being electronically programmed to externally reflect which of said plurality of operating modes is selected, said electronically programmable indicator being detectable without operating said electronic component.

16. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein said electronically programmable indicator is capable of being programmed by applying an electrical current or voltage to one or more contact points on said apparatus.

17. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein said electronically programmable indicator is a permanent indicator that once programmed retains its changed state.

18. The apparatus of claim 17 wherein said permanent indicator retains its changed state due to electrical isolation.

19. The apparatus of claim 17 wherein said permanent indicator retains its changed state due to a chemical reaction.

20. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein said electronically programmable indicator is human readable.

21. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein said electronically programmable indicator is readable using electronic equipment independently of any operation of the electronic component.

22. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein said electronically programmable indicator comprises a plurality of thermally alterable segments capable of being altered by heat from a flow of electrical current when the electronically programmable indicator is programmed.

23. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein said electronic component is a processor and wherein said electronically programmable indicator indicates a processor frequency

24. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein said electronic component is a processor and wherein said electronically programmable indicator indicates a processor frequency ratio.

25. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein said electronic component is a semiconductor

device and wherein said electronically programmable indicator indicates whether at least one feature is enabled.

26. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein said electronic component further comprises:
a fuse structure having at least one fuse, one or more of said at least one fuse being capable of being blown to indicate which of said plurality of operating modes is selected.

27. The apparatus of claim 26 wherein said fuse structure is coupled to said electrically programmable indicator to allow programming of said electronically programmable indicator in conjunction with programming of said fuse structure.

28. A method comprising:
determining a product characteristic for a product;
programming an electronically modifiable label for said product to indicate said product characteristic.

29. The method of claim 28 wherein programming comprises applying an electrical potential.

30. The method of claim 29 wherein programming further comprises blowing one or more of a plurality of fuses to force said product to operate in a mode indicated by said electrically modifiable label.

31. The method of claim 28 wherein said product is a semiconductor device and wherein determining comprises testing said product to determine its performance characteristics.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein determining further comprises analyzing customer orders to determine desired characteristics for said product.

33. A method comprising:

programming a particular inventory characteristic on a plurality of products by electrically altering electrically alterable labels for said plurality of products by application of an electrical potential; and performing inventory control functions by tracking said plurality of products based on information stored by said electronically alterable labels.

34. The method of claim 33 wherein programming the particular inventory characteristic comprises programming a date of manufacture.

35. The method of claim 33 wherein programming the particular inventory characteristic comprises programming a date of receipt.

36. The method of claim 35 wherein performing inventory control functions comprises calculating inventory turn-around time.

37. The method of claim 35 wherein performing inventory control functions comprises determining whether inventory is being properly rotated.

38. An apparatus comprising:

a processing portion capable of operating in a first mode and a second mode;

a detection circuit capable of detecting operation of the processing portion in the second mode;

an electronically programmable label;

a label programming circuit coupled to the electronically programmable label and coupled to the detection circuit to program the electronically programmable label to indicate that the processing portion has operated in the second mode if the detection circuit detects the processing portion operating in the second mode.

39. The apparatus of claim 38 wherein said second mode is a prohibited mode of operation and wherein said detection circuit is a prohibited mode detector.

40. The apparatus of claim 39 wherein said prohibited mode is an over-clocking mode in which said processing portion is clocked at a higher than expected frequency, and wherein said prohibited mode detector is an over-clocking detector.

41. The apparatus of claim 39 wherein said prohibited mode is an over-temperature mode and wherein said prohibited mode detector comprises a temperature sensor.

42. The apparatus of claim 39 wherein said prohibited mode is an intellectual property violation mode wherein said prohibited mode detector detects an unauthorized use of digital content.

43. A method comprising:

detecting a prohibited mode of operation;
indicating that the prohibited mode of operation has been entered by
electrically programming an electrically modifiable label.